



19 May 2005



## **SAFETY ALERT Two Soldiers Killed in Motorcycle Crash**

1. USAREUR lost two more Soldiers this past weekend in a tragic motorcycle crash. The Soldiers were riding late at night when the operator lost control of the motorcycle and hit a guardrail. Both Soldiers were thrown from the bike and suffered massive internal injuries. A host-nation doctor pronounced them dead at the scene.
2. Although the crash is still under investigation, initial reports indicate that the motorcycle was traveling 140 kilometers per hour (kph) in a 70 kph zone. Apparently neither Soldier—both of whom were sergeants—properly assessed the risks associated with their actions. As a result, both Soldiers paid the ultimate price. One left behind a wife and child, and the other left behind a wife and two children. What a heartbreaking loss.
3. Unfortunately, motorcycle accidents such as this are not isolated events. So far this fiscal year, 24 Soldiers have died in motorcycle accidents across the Army, which is more than the number killed in motorcycle accidents during all of FY 04. This is an ominous beginning for our motorcycle-riding season. If this trend continues, the Army will lose Soldiers to motorcycle crashes in numbers not seen since the 1970s and 1980s.
4. Operating a motorcycle in excess of posted speed limits or too fast for road conditions is fraught with danger. It is also contrary to our Army Values and the Warrior Ethos. Even operating a motorcycle properly involves significant risk.
  - A recent National Highway Safety Institute study reported that motorcyclists are about 26 times more likely to die in a crash than someone riding in a passenger vehicle. In 2001, motorcycles represented 2.2 percent of all registered vehicles in the United States and accounted for 0.34 percent of all vehicle miles traveled. However, crashes involving motorcycles accounted for 7.6 percent of all traffic fatalities.
  - About 80 percent of reported motorcycle crashes result in injury or death, while only about 20 percent of reported automobile crashes result in injury or death.
  - A motorcycle provides virtually no protection in a crash, which is one of the main reasons why motorcyclists are killed. In comparison, an automobile has door beams and a roof to provide some protection in case of impact or rollover, cushioning and airbags to soften the impact, and safety belts to hold passengers in their seats. An automobile also has more weight and bulk than a motorcycle, is easier for other drivers to see, has windshield washers and wipers to improve visibility during inclement weather, and is more stable because it has four wheels.

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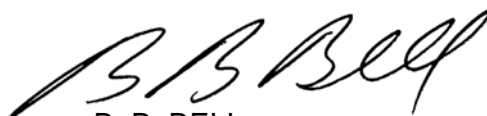
5. While some studies indicate that most motorcycle accidents are due to errors by automobile drivers, our experience in the Army is different. Most of our motorcycle fatalities are due to operators traveling at excessive speed, engaging in high-risk maneuvers, riding under the influence of alcohol, or failing to use the proper personal protective equipment. These fatalities could have been prevented.

• **Leaders:** It is your responsibility and duty to counsel and mentor your Soldiers. Identify your motorcycle riders. Ensure that they know how to practice composite risk management and make good risk-management decisions. In addition, ensure that they know what constitutes high- and low-risk behavior. Those who demonstrate high-risk behavior—and you know who they are—require your attention. Use your authority to suspend the licenses of those who show a lack of good judgment about safe and prudent motorcycle operation.

• **Motorcyclists:** The authorization to operate a motorcycle in Europe is a privilege, not a right. Your authorization to ride a motorcycle depends on your willingness to ride responsibly and safely. This means riding within your ability, observing the speed limit, not making risky maneuvers, not drinking and riding, and using the proper safety equipment. Riding a motorcycle is a risk in itself. Do not increase that risk by riding irresponsibly.

6. To prevent more tragedies, I ask each of you to consider the consequences of your actions and watch out for your family members, friends, and colleagues. Do not put yourself or others at risk, and do not be afraid to speak up if you see others engaging in risky behavior. *Don't walk by.*

7. Ensure that this safety alert is given the widest possible distribution by forwarding it electronically and posting it on unit bulletin boards. *No Loss of Life* is our goal. We must continue to strive for that goal as we execute with excellence Any Mission, Anywhere.



B. B. BELL  
General, US Army  
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